

# Educational Leadership and Common Discipline Issues of Elementary School Children and How to Deal with Them

Merfat Ayesh Alsubaie

Department of Educational Leadership, Research and Technology, K-12, Western Michigan University, 1903 W Michigan Ave, Kalamazoo, MI 49008  
E-mail: m.mervat@hotmail.com

## Abstract

Discipline issues are obstacles towards childhood learning in elementary school settings. There are a number of factors which positively and negatively affect a student's behavior in the classroom, and past literature was explored and an analysis of that literature performed in order to obtain a clear idea about the techniques, relationships, and structures that are conducive towards fostering positive behavior among children in the classroom, such as leadership of teachers and administration in schools. Close coordination between parents and teachers, the building and maintaining of a trustful environment in the class, a solid support structure that teachers can rely on, and good methods for communication between teachers and students all help in creating a positive learning environment and reducing the behavioral issues exhibited by children that can slow down the pace of learning.

**Keywords:** Common discipline issues, Strategies to discipline of elementary school children, and Leadership

## 1. Introduction

Children in the early elementary years need two basic things from their teachers: knowing for sure that their teachers love them and provide guidance and discipline when they make mistakes or have trouble following the rules. Teachers who are able to use both love and limits help their children develop those qualities the teachers wish to foster (Horner, H., Horner, R., & Sugai, 2000).

The things that make elementary children so interesting are the same things that can make raising and disciplining them somewhat tricky. After all, a full school day brings with it new experiences, new social situations and new opportunities to test boundaries. However, those boundaries are critical because like all children, elementary children thrive on love, consistent discipline even though staying lovingly consistent will be tough at times. Therefore, there are several issues that are of the most common discipline problems of elementary students, along with strategies and suggestions for guiding your child through these exciting, inspiring years (Closson, 2000).

Teachers' encouragement of children will help them discover their interests, strengths, and goals. It will also help them develop a positive and healthy self-concept. However, the teachers' role as encourager does not mean that you should not discipline children when necessary in the classroom. Thus, it is important to use prevention strategies that can reduce problems and help create a healthy home environment. This allows children to become more successful, confident, and happy. A lot can be done to prevent misbehaviour, which includes establishing a warm and supportive relationship with your child, letting your child make appropriate choices, and modelling positive behaviour (Closson, 2000).

Moreover, I choose this topic for my research because of particular reasons. One of them, when I was a teacher of second grade in the elementary school in K.S.A, I observed children in this age have discipline problems in the classroom. Therefore, I think that we as teachers should find effective and appropriate ways or strategies of educational leadership to deal well with these problems. Also, I love children in this age which is in the elementary, and I like to deal with them. However, in that time, I did not have the educational leadership skills to control my children's behaviours in the classroom because I was a new teacher. Therefore, the main question of this paper is what are most common discipline issues of elementary school children and how teachers deal with them through educational leadership?

This paper will focus on specific scholarly literature to examine the most common discipline problems of elementary children. Therefore, my goal for this paper is to explore several issues that are of interest, along with strategies and suggestions of educational leadership for guiding children through these exciting, inspiring years.

## 2. Review of Literature

There are several studies that argue the common discipline issues of elementary school children and several strategies of educational leadership to deal with them.

### Example of Common Discipline Issues of Elementary School Children:

#### Discipline is not Punishment

One of the studies notes that the term of discipline is not punishment, but it is teaching strategy. Thus, the

discipline has to be done out of love. At the same time, this study reports that there are some strategies of discipline that do not work all the time, but they work sometimes according to different situations. Also, this study indicates that discipline is to reinforce good behaviours and not only to correct the wrong work or actions of children (Common discipline problems of elementary school children and how to deal with them, 2004).

Another study reports that the goal of focusing on discipline issues of elementary school children and how to deal with them is encouraging teachers to teach children accordant behaviours and guide them to take responsibilities for their behaviours. Therefore, teachers have to be patient and understandable to follow strategies and techniques of educational leadership that help them to discipline children and demand respect from them in the classroom (Parenting Elementary through Teen, 2000).

### **Misbehaviour**

Some studies discuss specific discipline issues and suggest some solutions for them. One of them reports that misbehaviour is an obvious problem of discipline in the elementary school children. Misbehaviour of elementary school children arises at school more than at home. Teachers should be aware of how they may effectively deal with this type of discipline problem. As a result, teachers have to use the educational leadership strategies to relate a child's parents to discuss misbehaviour of a child and suggest several solutions. For example, teachers have to talk with a child about acceptable behaviours in the classroom instead of dealing with the child's misbehaviour by swearing or hitting the children (Common discipline problems of elementary school children and how to deal with them, 2004).

### **Children Rivalry**

Childhood rivalry, especially between siblings, is an example of discipline issues in elementary school children because this problem may cause fighting between children in the classroom. Children always want to be the best in the classroom, so they do things irrespective of thinking if this action is right or not because they do not have enough knowledge and growth yet. Therefore, teachers should use effective strategies of educational leadership to handle this issue and avoid the negative results. Teachers have to take children who rival each other to their separate corners in the classroom or in different classrooms and put specific roles of competition (Common discipline problems of elementary school children and how to deal with them, 2004).

### **Backtalk**

Backtalk is one of the most common discipline problems of elementary school children. Parents of children must teach their children how they must politely talk with their teachers in the classrooms. In addition, this study suggests that teachers have to explain to children what and why their actions and talking are not acceptable before punishing them and provide them with opportunities to apologize for their misbehaviours (Common discipline problems of elementary school children and how to deal with them, 2004).

### **Carelessness and Irresponsibility**

Another discipline problem which is popular of elementary children is carelessness and irresponsibility. For example, a child who forgets or loses his/her backpack in the classroom or the school bus many times. In addition, he/she does not care about his/her staff at the school. This study also suggests that the child should understand the results of his/her carelessness. For instance, when a child forgets his/her lunchbox in the at home, his/her parents should not bring it to him/her to the school. Because the child goes hungry, he/she may feel that he/she has to be more responsible next time (Common discipline problems of elementary school children, 2004).

### **Several Ways and Strategies to Discipline of Elementary School Children:**

#### **Sending the Child to the Administrator**

Kindelan (2011) notes that teachers of school administrators should send the child who has discipline problem to the administrator or remove a child from the classroom setting, such as out-of school suspension, in school suspension, or expulsion, as the strategy or method to deal with discipline issues of children. However, at the same time studies do not encourage this method to deal with a child discipline in elementary school because they support proactive and positive behavioural programs when dealing with student discipline at a school-wide, small intervention group, or individual basis (Luiselli, Putnam, Handler, Feinberg, 2005).

#### **Effective and Positive Dealing with Discipline Issues**

Different study finds that the school directors of elementary school have to be sure if their teachers effectively and positively deal with discipline issues of children. Therefore, this study also suggests that teachers should take the training courses which are provided teachers with using effective, research based strategies, Moreover, these training courses have be under the administrator of elementary schools( Hartzell & Petrie, 1992).

#### **Facilitate Applying Disciplinary Systems**

The leaders in the school should facilitate applying disciplinary systems after defining school wide discipline. Also, leaders have to establish and build disciplinary systems that are appropriate with children's ages and behaviours. It is important to have the assessment and intervention team because it is helpful to work with the number of students who engage in the most intense and frequent problems (Horner, Horner & Sugai, 2000).

#### **Feeling Respective and Safety in their School**

Marzano, Marano and Pickering (2003) indicate in their study that when teachers and children feel respected and

safe in their school, they will have effective teaching and learning, since children are interested and engaged in the classroom. Therefore, the engagement and interest of the students leads to fewer discipline problems of elementary school children.

### **Social Behaviours**

Some studies suggest that teachers should teach children the acceptable social behaviours in the classrooms and the schools through the curriculum and their methods of teaching. In addition, teachers have to work to improve children's behaviours by using the effective discipline strategies to ensure that children will be disciplined and safe. As a result, by this way, teachers can control, prepare, and provide children with important skills for successful adulthood (Sugai, Sprague, Horner & Walker, 200).

### **Citizenship Skills**

Bear (1998) notes that teachers in the United States teach children the citizenship skills and how to follow school rules. However, if children are misbehaving or not following the school rules, teachers and school administrators are to discipline the students. Therefore, most children come to school knowing how to behave, but others need to be taught these skills.

### **Positive relationship between Children and their Teachers**

The good and positive relationship between children and their teachers in the elementary school is the best strategy to reduce the discipline problems of elementary school children. Therefore, the leadership of school always encourages their teachers to make a positive relationship with the children in the classroom (IES Practice Guide, 2008).

### **Changing and Modifying the Classroom Environment**

Another study suggests that changing or modifying the classroom environment is one effective way to decrease the discipline problems of elementary school children because the environment of classroom, learning and teaching activities, and schedule of the classroom positively or negatively impact the behaviours of children, according to the teachers' leadership and organization for their classrooms. Therefore, teachers in their classrooms have to support children's sharing in the several activities in the classroom which reduce the discipline problems of elementary school children (IES Practice Guide, 2008).

### **Reinforcement**

This study recommends that teachers have to teach and reinforce new and effective skills, such as social, personal leadership, and communication skills to increase the positive and acceptable behaviours thought their methods, curricula, and strategies. Therefore, teachers through their educational leadership experiences can reduce the discipline issues of elementary school children because they establish and make a positive and effective educational environment in their classrooms (IES Practice Guide, 2008).

### **Model of Appropriate Behaviour**

A different study suggests that teachers should provide children who are in the elementary school with a model of appropriate behaviour though using several strategies and methods of teaching, such as problem solving, role-play, and simulation. Thus, children will have background of the acceptable behaviours in the classrooms, so they behave according to this model. In addition, teachers must accept responsibility for leading or guiding the behaviours of all children in the classroom and school setting and environment at the same time. This study also notes that it is important of teachers to connect and communicate with administration of school, children, and their parents to discuss children performance and their behaviours in the classrooms. As a result, teachers can reduce the discipline issues of elementary school children (Bushnell way elementary discipline plan, 2012).

### **Examples for Negative and Unacceptable Behaviours of Elementary School Children:**

This study gives examples for negative and unacceptable behaviours of elementary school children which are required to connect with leaders of school and parents of children to find ways of disciplining children's behaviours in the classrooms and schools. For example, congregating for inappropriate conducts, wearing inappropriate clothing, taking others' belongings, talking without permission in classes, running and playing in classrooms instead of other areas which are assigned play area in the schools, and not completing assigned work are common discipline problem of elementary school children that need effective dealing and handling with them. Therefore, the educational leadership of school and teachers should find or create a solution that is designed to encourage students to have an idea of acceptable and unacceptable behaviours in the classroom and school and their punishments to avoid inappropriate behaviours (Bushnell way elementary discipline plan, 2012).

### **Educating in the Elementary Schools:**

Educating in the elementary schools is one of the hardest actions because teachers deal with children. Thus, it is significant for teachers to have the educational leadership skills and use several techniques, theories, and methods of educational leadership for guidance and discipline through the hard times to build a positive relationship with children in the classroom. By this way, teachers can effectively deal and treat the discipline issues of elementary schools children (Parenting Elementary through Teen, 2000).

### 3. Analysis

This study is based on a review of some current researches. This analysis led me to deeper thinking to investigate some common discipline problems of elementary school children, and how to deal with them through the leadership in school. Therefore, I agree that the school's staff, especially teachers and managers should take an educational training program that is important to teach and prepare principal and student-teachers for working in the classroom and dealing with several problems in their classrooms. In conducting my analysis, I examined existing literature and compared it to my own experience. I wanted to draw parallels between my experiences and also see how different educators handled similar situations. I compared and contrasted the methods I saw in order to create this analysis.

In my classroom when I was a teacher of a second grade in the elementary school, I had some questions in my mind about how I could deal with my students, how could I control their behaviours in the classrooms, how to effectively use my leadership with children, and how children could apply what I taught and wanted. How could I incorporate the children's knowledge and skills that are important to learning and discipline in the classroom? Those were significant questions when I worked with children in the elementary schools classroom. Therefore, I tried to enhance the children's lives by attempting to explore more active methods of implementation teaching and learning and support their positive behaviours that are naturally in them. Also, I diversified my approaches, such as simulation, role-playing, problem solving, and cooperative learning. I practiced these methods many times with children, so the children adjusted with acceptable behaviours. Moreover, I always tried to invest children's energy according to the environment of my classroom through several methods and strategies of teaching and learning. Therefore, I could reduce the discipline issues of elementary school children and controlled their behaviours.

Because I was a teacher of Arabic reading and writing for second grade girls in the elementary school who were from several cultures, such as Saudi Arabian, Iraqi, Syrian, and Egyptian, I found some issues in dealing with students and teaching in this classroom. Therefore, I agree that there are some discipline problems of elementary school children regarding the classroom environment and relationship between teachers and children who are in the elementary schools and teachers' methods and strategies , that influence the discipline behaviours of students because the educational systems represented in the classroom are culturally different. So, I think that administration of schools should provide the teachers with the effective leadership tools that help them to discipline the children.

Lastly, I agree that teachers have to modify their leadership, curricula, and methods to be appropriate for dealing with discipline problems of elementary school children. In addition, I agree that the relationship between teachers and their students in the elementary school plays an important role to motivate the students to learn in a safe environment. Teachers should connect and communicate with parents of children to find the best solutions of discipline issues of elementary school children.

### 4. Practical Implications

There is a correlation between educational leadership and discipline in the classrooms. Because discipline behaviours of elementary school are important part of educational leadership, the educational leadership should reflect and is an appropriate and positive behaviour of children. As a result, building a good relationship between teachers and children is one good idea and way of teacher's educational leadership that should be practical to have positive results in the classroom because children will understand and feel comfortable; then they are able to interact and achieve.

As we teachers, when we face discipline problems of elementary school children, we should be aware of how to deal with them through educational leadership. Children in the elementary schools are more active, so we have to find or create effective ways and strategies to handle the discipline issues. For example, we can use positive and negative reinforcement when we use these activities. Also, we should put specific roles and polices for these activities to be able to control children's behaviours.

Educational leadership and teaching methods, like reinforcement, can be utilized by teachers that face children who have different discipline issues in the classroom. I think that teachers can control children's behaviours with reinforcement. For example, teachers can use negative reinforcement when they want to remove or take away something from the child and give a response to the child's negative behaviour. Therefore, teachers should try pay attention of children who have discipline problems. They can change the classroom's role to suit the classroom situation of students. Teachers can create new methods of teaching and diversify of them, for all students like and interest learning also. Moreover, teachers can talk with children about the acceptable and unacceptable behaviours in the classroom and deal and control their behaviours in classroom by using reinforcement. Thus, when teachers record the observations about children's behaviours, they will be able to control children's behaviours.

Teachers should choose effective methods of educational leadership and teaching depending on their students likes and dislikes. These help children to learn more since they are enjoying working with classmates.

Further, teachers should learn several techniques and style of educational leadership to deal and control the children's behaviours in the classroom and restructure their past experiences according to new situations.

According to my experience, when I taught the children who were in second grade in elementary school in Saudi Arabia, I had three children that had discipline problems in the classroom. At the beginning, I had problems and difficulty in dealing with them because I did not have a good knowledge about educational leadership of teacher that I was a new teacher. Therefore, I asked the professional teachers who had a strong educational leadership and asked their mothers about the children's behaviour and how I could deal with them. One of them always ate her breakfast meal during class. At the same time, another student talked and answered without permission, so she did not give the other classmates opportunities to participate. Also, one of them went out of class and entered many times without permission. Therefore, I tried to change my educational leadership way with them to discipline. I tried to include them and their classmates in a study group gave them some responsibilities in the classroom, such as collecting homework, and I ate my breakfast meal with them and their classmates in breakfast break or time, and I observed their behaviour in celebrating, such as national holiday was recorded at the school. As a result, I could control and deal well with their behaviours in the classroom through using another way of educational leadership. Indeed, I could control their behaviours after I collected information about this problem from their parents, changed my methods of educational leadership, and reinforced their behaviours by using words of encouragement.

## 5. Conclusion

In concluding, the results of this research showed there is a need for particular training and dealing that go beyond crisis management with discipline problems of elementary school, and the safety and security of children and how to solve the problems around discipline issues, and how to deal with them through discipline techniques. For example, teachers who are taught to deal with children in the elementary schools can reduce the discipline issues in their classrooms through approaches of their educational leadership, teaching, and learning because they have strong influences on attitudes in their classrooms. Therefore, teachers should explore the discipline issues in their classroom as they arise and deal with them. The teachers should learn and use several techniques to control the children's behavior in the classroom and restructure their past experiences according to new situations.

In addition, administrators of schools should be aware and considerate about the importance of relationship between teachers, methods, educational leadership, children's parents, and culture because these points are significant for the teacher and the student from more than one way. Thus, collaboration between these factors and children help to reform education through modifying and changing the educational leadership of schools. Teachers must work with parents to instill a common understanding about expected understanding from children in the classroom and in the home.

Finally, present and future educating and dealing with discipline problems of elementary school children should stay abreast of current children discipline research in the educational community. Children should have the right to learn in safe and nurturing environment, and managers have to be responsible for learning and using effective and fair disciplinary strategies and techniques to achieve that goal.

## References

- Bear, G. (1998). School discipline in the United States: Prevention, correction, and long-term social development. *School Psychology Review, 27*, 14.
- Bushnell Way Elementary. (2012). Bushnell way elementary discipline plan. Retrieved from <http://www.bushnell-lausd-ca.schoolloop.com/disciplineplan>
- Closson, D. (2000). Helping your child in school. Probe Ministries International, 1996-2003.
- Common discipline problems of elementary school children and how to deal with them. (2004). Texas: Laredo: United Independent School District. The Parents Institute, 22039-7474
- Hartzell, G. & Petrie, T. (1992). The principal and discipline: Working with school structures, teachers, and students. *Clearing House, 65*(6).
- Horner, H., Horner, R., & Sugai, G. (2000, February). A school wide approach to student discipline: An alternative to get-tough measures that show promise for dealing with disruptive students with disabilities. *The School Superintendents Association*.
- IES Practice Guide. (2008). Reducing behavior problems in the elementary school classroom. U. S. Department of Education.
- Kindelan, J. (2011, April 21). Elementary school administrator training in the area of handling students' discipline. *Educational Leadership and Policy Studies*.
- Luiselli, J, Putnam, R, Handler, M. & Feinberg, A. (2005). Whole-school positive behavior support: Effects on students discipline problems and academic performance. *Educational Psychology, 25*, 183-198.
- Marzano, R. Marzano, J. & Pickering, D. (2003). Classroom management that works: Research-based strategies



- for every teacher. Alexandria, VA: Association for supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Parenting Elementary Through Teen. (2000). Guidance and discipline for early elementary children. Iowa State University. Retrieved from <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PM1547J.pdf>
- Sugai, G. Sprague, J. Horner, R. & Walker, H. (2000). Preventing school violence: The use of Office discipline referrals to assess and monitor school-wide discipline intervention. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disoroeas*. Vol.8. No.2
- W. T. Henning Elementary School. (2004). discipline problems of elementary school children and how to deal with them. LA: Sulphur. Parent Institute, a division of NIS, Inc. Retrieved from <http://henning.cpsb.org/DisciplineParentInstitute.pdf>

The IISTE is a pioneer in the Open-Access hosting service and academic event management. The aim of the firm is Accelerating Global Knowledge Sharing.

More information about the firm can be found on the homepage:  
<http://www.iiste.org>

## CALL FOR JOURNAL PAPERS

There are more than 30 peer-reviewed academic journals hosted under the hosting platform.

**Prospective authors of journals can find the submission instruction on the following page:** <http://www.iiste.org/journals/> All the journals articles are available online to the readers all over the world without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. Paper version of the journals is also available upon request of readers and authors.

## MORE RESOURCES

Book publication information: <http://www.iiste.org/book/>

Academic conference: <http://www.iiste.org/conference/upcoming-conferences-call-for-paper/>

## IISTE Knowledge Sharing Partners

EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, JournalTOCS, PKP Open Archives Harvester, Bielefeld Academic Search Engine, Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB, Open J-Gate, OCLC WorldCat, Universe Digital Library , NewJour, Google Scholar

